

potential is not being realized and the Prime Minister has set-up a Group of Ministers to tackle infrastructure issues;

(b) whether main obstacles at present are poor connectivity, lack of information, visa restrictions and accommodation; and

(c) if so, to what extent the recommendations of the Committee have been implemented?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI): (a) Yes, Sir. A Group of Ministers (GoM) had been constituted in July, 2004.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) Issues like augmenting air seat capacity, augmenting hotel accommodation, immigration problems and visa-on-arrival were discussed in the three meetings of the GoM held on 17th January, 2005, 14th February, 2005 and 3rd March, 2005. While air seat capacity from a number of tourist generating markets has been substantially increased, there has not been significant progress on expansion of hotel room capacity, setting up of Immigration Facilitation Group at the international airports and introduction of visa-on-arrival facility, as recommended by the GoM.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister has reviewed the tourism sector on 21st September, 2006 and it has now been decided that Tourism will be included under the National Infrastructure Committee chaired by the Prime Minister. The Committee will review the progress of infrastructure components of the Tourism sector.

Loans to farmers in Bihar

2925. SHRI MOTIUR RAHMAN: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether banks are providing loans @7 per cent to farmers and if so, the number of farmers belonging to districts Motihari and Champaran, Bihar;

(b) whether ineligible farmers have also been given loan in violation of the laid down rules/norms; and

(c) whether any proposal to review all such loans given by Punjab National Bank, Pachpakrdi Branch and Central Bank of India and State Bank of India, Dhaka Block, Bihar?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) to (c) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House of the extent available.

Financial support to Health Insurance Scheme in Kerala

2926. SHRI P.R. RAJAN: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Competent Authority had sanctioned any financial support to the Health Insurance Scheme initiated by Kerala during January, 2006;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the total financial support granted and present status of the scheme as on today; and

(c) if not, the reasons in details for not providing subsidy for the above scheme?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) to (c) The Universal Health Insurance Scheme (UHS), for BPL families is specifically designed for implementation through the Public Sector General Insurance Companies only. As the parameters of the scheme finalized by the Government of Kerala to be implemented through a private insurer are different from the UHS, it is not possible for the Central Government to provide subsidy.

Review of performance of banks

2927. SHRI ABU ASIMAZMI: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether a comprehensive review of performance of the banks has been undertaken recently;

(b) if so, the outcome thereof;

(c) whether the beneficiaries under various rural development programmes including the Below Poverty Line families particularly minority community are being deprived of loan facilities in some States in the country;

(d) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(e) the remedial steps being taken by Government in this regard?